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Bickford, Jessie Playfair
For this hour and other
poems

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April 1937.

For This Hour

AND OTHER POEMS

By Jessie Playfair Bickford

FOR THIS HOUR

Above the anthem of the singing tide
Let no leave-taking, upflung to the night,
Render less dear the troth that now we plight.
Let love's revolving flame in us abide
Unquenched. Dream upon glamorous dream supplied
The treasure for this hour; your shadowed face
Against this white wistaria spray is all
That I shall ever see when springs recall
Remembrance of your swift and valorous pride.

So shall we part, while measured breath of grief
Remains undrawn. Earth's dim and holy gifts
Are closely dewed with tears but you and I
Have found the tender solace of belief
Which like a halo crowns each hour and lifts
All shadow of despair. The autumn leaf
Voices no least lament for rapture lost,
But yields, as our love must, to winter's frost.

*Poems included have appeared in THE CANADIAN BOOKMAN,
THE OREGONIAN, SEATTLE STARDUST, THE VANCOUVER DAILY
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are due.*

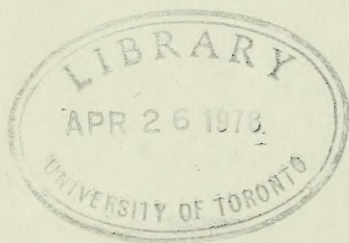
*With Compliments
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ENCHANTMENT

How very fragile are the things that hold
Men in a far-off land that knows them not;
Skies, where pale fingers of the dawn unfold
A dreaming thatch of dappled apricot . . .
Hushed sands, made silver by an Orient moon
On drowsy cruise, when April shyly weaves
Her tapestry of stars, to fairy tune
Rippling with bird-song and the stir of leaves.

Even as fragile were the things that called
Our sires away from shores across the world;
A plain or lake by mist-green forest walled . . .
The quiet roll of drums, a flag unfurled.

And now, returned to lands our fathers knew,
We contact glamour through some wistful bond —
A summer meadow bathed in early dew . . .
A dripping veil of twilight on a pond.



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THE ONLY HIGHWAY

The only highway that can ever linger

Is fashioned on the other side of song,
Where honeysuckle hangs no yellow finger,
And neither star nor spent caprice belong.

There into silence, like a sunset dreamer

To-day will shuffle past some twilight space,
Through meadows dressed to flaunt no farewell streamer
Of rainbow gaiety before her face.

There dawn is but a halo for lost treasure,

When hearts that sing are drowsed by Sorrow's call —
And afternoon is but a creeping measure . . .
A ticking clock . . . grey lizards on a wall.

Feet may not trace what Time has taken — buds

Shall seal the eyes of all who try to keep
One early hour of rapture from the floods
Of dimming phantoms that belong to Sleep.

DEPARTURE

When you are gone

The hours ^{will} seem more grey.

Weary the task

And drab, with you away.

Days will unfold and deepen and grow chill —

No more your steps will brush

The grasses on the hill.

When you are gone

The lonely year will wane.

Spring-time will stir,

Will live and fade again

There will be grief — a ^{frighted} ~~frightened~~ sigh, a tear —

There will be music

Which you cannot hear.

When you are gone

Another star will set.

The rose will bloom,

Will wither and forget.

Alien the hands, the laughter and the play —

All will be new and strange,

For you will be away.

WINDOW OF MORNING

Just to ascend my country's hills
At blue of morning, when August fills
Her goblet to the brim with wine!
When perfume lifts from sage-brush and pine,
And the cinder-grey of a canyon's slope
Mingles with claret and heliotrope
That a new day gathers to make her quilt
Over the ledges that winds have built.

Just to weave up beyond forest and pass,
Through feathery waste of sun-bleached grass! . . .
Up and up, while the silence fingers
The lips of the wind, and a drowsy bird lingers
Upon a bough that droops to the trail
Where shadow wreathes a delicate veil.

Just to turn when the summit is won,
And behold, with a catch of breath, the sun
Gilding the terraced acres and bowers! . . .
With the town below like a patch of flowers
In a bowl the dreaming hills have made
Out of rainbow tissue and flushed brocade.
Threads of two hesitant rivers meet,
Blue as cornflowers that blow in the wheat;
Dew-green sallows and soft cloud fleeces,
Roofs like jetty lacquered creases,
Silver and gold for the wind to spend,
And mulberry shades that flicker and blend.

.
When on my heart the last light spills,
Lord, grant me vision of my country's hills!

A LEAVE-TAKING

How can I rest when all I know of peace
Is left behind upon a friendly hill,
Whispering where arbutus branches crease
A pattern on the morning's dewy sill?

The light creeps greyly to this leaf that holds
A tongue of amber in its withered cup;
Over the garden, over the lane unfolds
The vagabond sound of Autumn rippling up.

Scatter no hush of words for me — instead
Let silence close around each broken thing . . .
For days are petals that the year has shed,
And faces are the soul's imagining.

How can I rest, when all I know of peace
Is tangled in a distant web of loss?
Life . . . just an hour or two of shared caprice —
Then roses in the shadow of a cross.

AN EXILE ON ST. PATRICK'S DAY

I have a need to-day of Erin's magic,
Of mountain thrushes in a greening lane
Where gypsy winds are wooing fern and kingcup . . .
(Be still, my heart, you shall know these again!)

I have a need of moors and spreading lime-trees,
Of cabins drowsing on their hills of sleep,
With loosestrife purpling the thatch and dooryard . . .
(Drink deep from Memory's cup, my heart, drink deep!)

My country calls me home — that blossoming sloe-bush
White, like a bride above a silver pool;
That morning breath of turf-sods in a marshland
Where water starworts idle, hushed and cool.

I hear the roving winds of Ireland singing
To March-blue skies, and emerald paths ashine . . .
(Seek not to-day, but on some glad to-morrow
You shall have back your treasures, heart of mine!)

SOMETIMES GREEN

You ^{who} have lost a season's rhapsody
In some devouring labyrinth of grief,
Sensing the substance of forgotten days,
But not their wonder, not their quickening —
Remember how each frond and budded leaf
Came to its birth where other growth had died,
With lace of tissue seeking swift to hide ^{though}
Old scars . . . remember April's breath, ~~through~~ brief,
Was filled with promise of the summer's yield . . .
Recall a road which beckoned . . . love's demesne . . .
And that earth's changing robes are sometimes green.



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